Oral Family History

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Researching is a difficult thing to do considering my grandfather *Hastings* on my father’s side (James Hastings) and my grandmother *Hastings* are both diseased. My Real father’s name is James Denton Hastings and we have not spoken to each other in over 20 years. He divorced my mother when I was 9 years old and it never really seemed to matter to him the impact that he caused the family; no need to go on.

My grandfather *Olin* *Hardy* on my mother’s side (Sandra Gail Hardy) is also diseased. He died doing what he enjoyed and that is forestry. I remember my grandfather as a collector of every new thing that came along. He loved bees and making honey for the family. My grandmother *Lucile Hardy* is still alive but she is impossible to call from here. She is closing in on the age of a centurion and the last time we visited she was doing well. She is blind but can still listen to the television and radio for entertainment. She currently lives in a nursing center in Washington State.

My mother just had a massive stroke and my sister has a disease which is slowly taking her life from her so it was very difficult contacting them let alone an interview of any sorts. My Brother has also isolated himself from the family so needless to say, we are not a close knit family like most others are.

My parents (biological parents) divorced when I was 9 years old and my mother remarried Ron Winans a year later. They were married 10 years and divorced when I joined the United States Air force. My biological sister Angie Morehouse has followed the same path as my mother and is currently single. My biological brother, as I mentioned above, no longer has any ties with our family. I have four stepbrothers and 1 stepsister that I am not in contact with considering my mother divorced my stepfather.

Needless to say, contacting a family member for an interview is almost impossible. I was able to contact my uncle who served in the Army for 30 years and even wrote a book on his military life while serving. He was delusional when I spoke to him but I do still have the book that he sent me which makes for an excellent artifact and research item.

Many of my good friends and one of my step brothers still keep in contact through face book. One of the things that we all have in common is the US Military (we all are veterans). This is where I pulled discussions from; not exactly interviews but discussion with the same avenue for data collection. Our histories are all very much alike in that we don’t really contact (or stay in contact) with our families. We have all formed a bond much deeper and in understanding in all that we have gone through.

Many of my friends are in (or have served) in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force. I have even kept in contact with the hundreds of subordinates I mentored or was mentored by them along the way in 26 years. We all have our gripes but the biggest and most concerned gripe that we all have is that the military just isn’t the same as it once was.

My current family is the Air Force and has been for longer than the time spent with my biological family considering I left home when I was 17 years old. I have had many adventures along the way and forged deep friendships. When I do contact an old buddy of mine, it’s most always in a complaining way on what changes we can expect now.

When I joined the Air Force in 1983, it was out of necessity considering I just finished high school and was a lost soul. I tried to stay in a rented trailer and work at a burger hop, but it was not in my blood. I wanted to see the world and was told that it was possible by joining the military. My first thought was the U.S. Coast Guard and then that morphed into the Navy. I found out that I got seasick easily and decided to fly jets for adventure.

The recruiters had a hay day with me and I packed my bags with full knowledge that I would fly the F-16 Fighting Falcon. I was told untrue information (as well as all of my friends and step brother). We were all told things that just did not transpire as we were told they would. I was handed a mop and yelled at daily in boot camp. I had flashbacks as my biological father once told me how he was screamed at daily while he served a few weeks in the U.S. Army. He hated it so badly that he went through the Congressman to get out of the military and as fast as he could.

When boot camp ended, I was sent to Missouri (which was also an untrue statement I was told prior to joining up) as all of my friends as well. The recruiter really had us believing that we would all end up in Hawaii but we all ended up in a location that was the exact opposite of what we were told.

The military is the same today as it was 26 years ago in that respect. I hear the same stories from all the research and discussions that I have. We were also promised free medical and dental for life when we joined. Now, it’s like pulling teeth to get your teeth pulled. I waited in line for 8 hours day after day for an appointment – it never came. No matter what you call it but the promised free medical for life is not free anymore and you must pay for TRICARE Prime.

Dental care is also a thing of the past. Back when I joined the Air Force, dental care and medical care were the same as active duty for the retirees but not anymore.

When I joined, I was told that I would receive 50% of my final paycheck for life and that my spouse would be also covered if I should pass away. Wow! Have times changed. I was asked for a reduction to 30% or face getting a pink slip. I was so frightened after 15 years in that I assumed it was all for nothing (that is happening today with a lot of the officers – serve 18 and get the boot with nothing but a pen). I stayed on and took my chances as with all of my friends who were also serving. We all made it but had to stay three years in our rank to get the 50% pension promised us at 20 years in. The life Insurance is now called SBP (Survivors Benefit Plan) and it is not free as we were all told. It costs almost $150 a month until we are all over 65 years old, then your spouse does not get the 50% promised but it is 50% (of the 50% pension) thus half.

These may sound like trivial gripes that we all share, but when a person is promised something and then the slate is wiped clean and something else takes its place, it is a real downer for all of the concerned. Now, the military is talking about revamping the entire retirement system again but when a person does his/her research, the people who retire from the military with full pension is only 1%. So Congress is debating about a payoff (Vesting) at half the time in if military personnel decide to get out after 10 years. This is a huge broken promise to the countless tens of thousands already serving. Is this fair to change the rules (midgame)?

The debate will rage on until it will just be done as it was to all of us serving from the years of 1983-2009.

I feel that life in the military was much simpler and even more harmonious when I was serving within my first 10 years as with all of my comrades in arms. We were still under the belief that everything we were promised would remain the same but my history (as well as all of theirs) has changed as time went by. Many promises were broken and if it were not for us sounding off, no one would have even of known.